

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #144, December 11, 2009 – January 7, 2010
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

QUAGMIRE, FULL SPEED AHEAD

Why the U.S. can't win in Afghanistan,
Page 10



A tank zooms across the valley in Kamp Holland, on the outskirts of Tarin Kowt, the provincial capital of Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, June 14, 2007. PHOTO: FLICKR.COM/DAVIDAXE (CC)

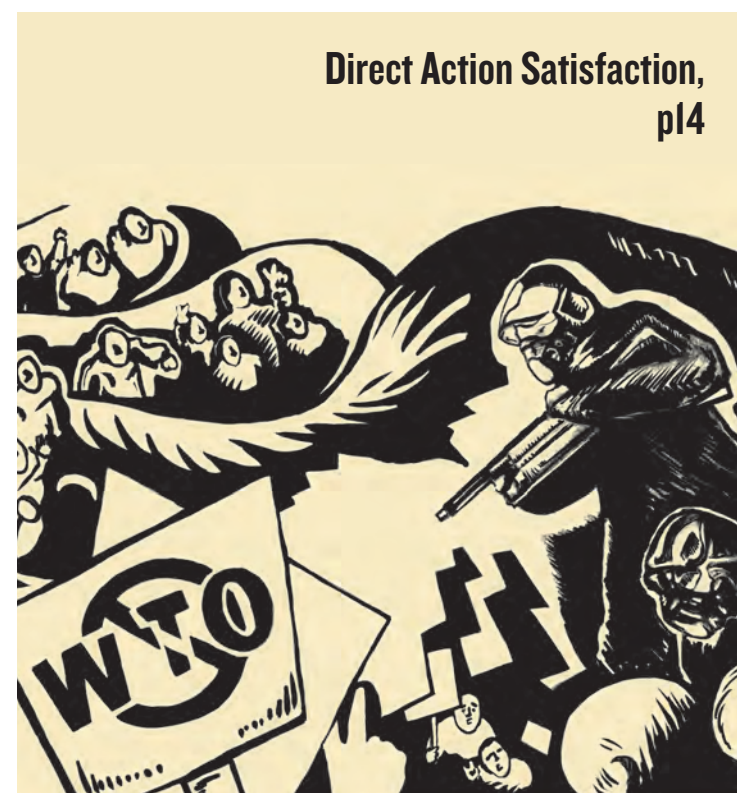


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PHOTO: TIM RUSSO



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indypendent.org



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The Independent is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays to our print and online readership of more than 200,000. The newspaper is a labor of love produced by a network of volunteers who do all of the reporting, writing, photography, illustration, editing, designing, distribution, fundraising and website management. Since 2000, more than 650 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Independent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging people to produce their own media. *The Independent* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Independent is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement (indymedia.org), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grass-roots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other volunteer projects: the children's newspaper *IndyKids*, the IndyVideo news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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community calendar

PLEASE SEND EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS TO INDYEVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

WED DEC 16

7:30 pm • \$6/\$10/\$15

DISCUSSION AND PERFORMANCE: MONEY JUNGLE: THE AESTHETICS AND ECONOMICS OF INDEPENDENT MUSIC. This presentation will focus on the struggle of independent musicians to develop their craft in struggling economy. Brecht Forum, 451 West St 212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

THU DEC 17

7pm • Free

BOOK RELEASE: *GRAFFITI NEW YORK*.

Author Eric Felisbret, as well as many of the artists featured in the book, will be available to sign copies.

Revolution Books, 146 W 26th St 212-691-3345 • revolutionbooksnyc.org

FRI DEC 18

8pm • \$10/\$6 kids

MUSIC: THIRD FRIDAY WITH THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP. An evening of music with singer/songwriters David Roche and Anne Keating.

The Good Coffeehouse Music Parlor 53 Prospect Park West, Bklyn 718-768-2972 • gchmusic.org

SAT DEC 19

1-3pm • Free

PROTEST: HOLIDAY CAROLING FOR JUSTICE. Demonstrators will sing parody Christmas carols outside the Leviev jewelry store at 700 Madison Ave as part of a boycott against Lev Leviev's companies for their roles in Israeli settlement construction and diamond-related human rights abuses in Angola. Adalah-NY: The Coalition for Justice in the Middle East adalahny.org

7:30-8:30pm • Free

PERFORMANCE: COQUITO CABARET.

El Museo del Barrio will host a holiday extravaganza with performance artist Carmelita Tropicana and comic/actress Marga Gomez.

El Café, El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave 212-831-7272 • elmuseo.org

MON DEC 21

6-9pm • \$20

THEATER: *LA CONTESSA'S CHRISTMAS CAROL*. A campy version of *A Christmas Carol* to benefit The Center and The LGBT Theatre Company. Reception starts at 6pm, show starts at 7pm.

LGBT Center, 208 W 13th St

212-620-7310 • gaycenter.org

SUN DEC 27

1-4pm • Free

ACTION: SOLIDARITY MARCH AND RALLY. Meet at Rockefeller Center and march to the Israeli Mission and the United Nations in support of Palestine. Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, 50th St and Fifth Ave 718-228-8636 • al-awdany.org

6-9pm • \$6

BENEFIT: RADICAL LITERATURE. A benefit for Revolution Books and a tribute to Edna St. Vincent Millay, with special guests Postcard Poets from Purgatory Pie Press and music by Foamola.

Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery

212-614-0505 • bowerypoetry.com

WED DEC 30

7pm • \$8

READINGS: THREE ROOMS PRESS PRESENTS 3 BOOKS AND A BAND.

Three author readings of new releases from Three Rooms Press and music by The JDs. Peter Carlaftes will read from *A Year on Facebook*, George Wallace will read from *Poppin' Johnny* and Jane Ormerod will read from *Recreational Vehicles on Fire*.

Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery

212-614-0505 • bowerypoetryclub.com

THU DEC 31

10:30pm • Free

PARTY: NEW YEAR'S EVE BIKE RIDE AND AFTER PARTY. Meet under the arch at Washington Square Park and ride or skate to Belvedere Castle in Central Park. Or come to the castle at 11:45pm for music, dancing and fireworks. Time's Up! 212-802-8222 • times-up.org

SAT JAN 2

8-10:30pm • \$15 Sugg

MUSIC: PEOPLES' VOICE CAFÉ.

Performances by Kim and Reggie Harris and Jon Fromer.

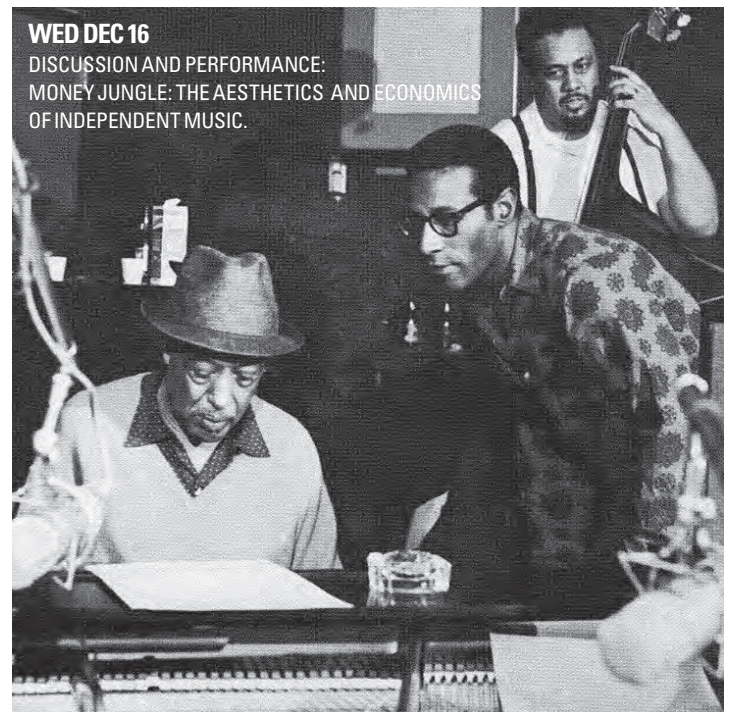
Peoples' Voice Café, Community Church of NY Unitarian Universalist, 40 E 35th St 212-787-3903 • peoplesvoicecafe.org

SUN JAN 3

10am-4pm • Free

RECYCLING: E-WASTE RECYCLING DAY.

The Lower East Side Ecology Center will hold an electronics recycling day. Drop off computers, printers, televisions, cell



WED DEC 16

DISCUSSION AND PERFORMANCE: MONEY JUNGLE: THE AESTHETICS AND ECONOMICS OF INDEPENDENT MUSIC.

phones and more. Contact for details.

17th St and Broadway

212-477-4022 • lesecologycenter.org

TUE JAN 5

8-11pm • Free

MUSIC: VOX POP BLUES NIGHT. A night of great blues music with guitar master Michael Powers.

Vox Pop Café, 1022 Cortelyou Rd, Bklyn

718-940-2084 • voxpopnet.net

WED JAN 6

8:45am • Free

EVENT: COURT SUPPORT. The first day of court for Syed Fahad, a U.S. citizen who has been in solitary confinement for two and a half years while awaiting trial. Supporters will meet at U.S. District Court, 500 Pearl St The Free Fahad Campaign freefahad.com

11AM-1PM • FREE

PARADE: THREE KINGS DAY PARADE.

El Museo del Barrio presents its traditional Three Kings Day Parade through the streets of El Barrio featuring music and dancing.

El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave

212-831-7272 • elmuseo.org

MON JAN 11

All Day • Free

EVENT: FAST AND VIGIL TO SHUT

DOWN GUANTÁNAMO. The fast begins on the 8th anniversary of the creation of Guantánamo Bay detention center, which will end Jan 22, one year after President Obama signed an executive order to close the prison within a year. Events will be held in NYC and Washington, D.C. Witness Against Torture witnessstorture.org

TUE JAN 12

6-7pm • Free

JOIN US: *The Independent* will host an informational meeting for new volunteers. Email volunteer@indypendent.org for information.

FRI JAN 15

INTERNSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE: *The Independent* is currently accepting applications for its Spring Reporting Internship that starts Feb. 1. For application, email internships@indypendent.org.

SUN JAN 17

5-7pm • \$10 Door

INDYPENDENT FUNDRAISER: Meet Remi Kanazi, editor of *Poets for Palestine*, and *Independent* journalists returning from Gaza, who will discuss the current situation in Palestine. Hors d'oeuvres and cash bar.

Brecht Forum, 451 West St

212-904-1282 • indypendent.org

There is a simple rule of good reporting that we teach to aspiring journalists: Get to the point.

THANK YOU!

The Independent's fall fund drive raised \$18,000 in donations from more than 300 readers. Your support keeps us strong as we begin our 10th anniversary year.

WISHING YOU A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON,

~THE INDYPENDENT

TAKING A STAND AGAINST AFGHAN WAR

BY CHUCK ZLATKIN

When President Obama finished his Dec. 1 address to the nation from West Point announcing his escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan, I headed to the northwest corner of Eighth Avenue and 24th Street to express my dissent.

Members of Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War and Mouths Wide Open, another antiwar group, handed out fliers encouraging people to contact the White House stating their opposition to the es-

calation. Drivers sped by honking their horns and flashing peace signs at the 25 of us as we held aloft placards with messages such as “No More Troops!: We Need an Exit Plan for Afghanistan and Money for Health Care Not War.”

Chelsea Neighbors United has gathered on this street corner every Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. since May 2005. It began as a group opposed to the war in Iraq, but has evolved to include the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well.



OUTSPOKEN: Chuck Zlatkin of Chelsea Neighbors United Against the War, talks to a passerby on the northwest corner of 24th Street and Eighth Avenue Dec. 8 at the group's weekly antiwar vigil. PHOTO: ANDREW HINDERAKER

calation. Drivers sped by honking their horns and flashing peace signs at the 25 of us as we held aloft placards with messages such as “No More Troops!: We Need an Exit Plan for Afghanistan and Money for Health Care Not War.”

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She said that she was “sickened by Obama’s speech and felt betrayed.”

It was the 238th consecutive week that we had held a “stand-up,” and as usual, it was a unique experience; you can never anticipate what will happen. One week, it was a neighborhood kid heading to Iraq, another week it was a soldier just arrived home who stopped to speak with us. We have met the mother of a soldier in Afghanistan and the spouse of a Marine in Iraq describing her anguish. We have met people from

Italy, England and Jordan telling us how happy they are to see Americans protesting the war. Once, we had the the woman who works in the neighborhood tell us that she had seen our vigil for years and decided this is the week that she would finally join us.

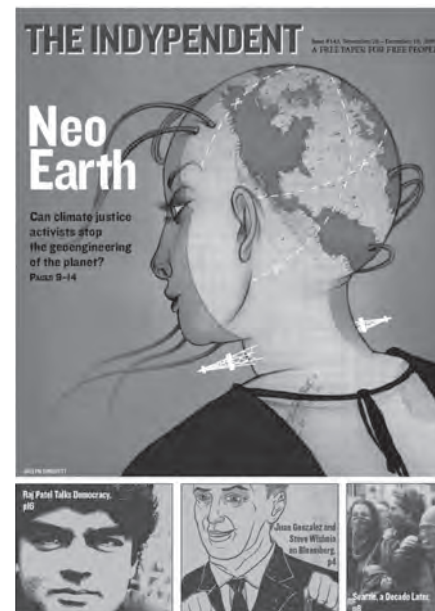
The main thing that I have learned standing up each week is that you can’t change anyone’s mind. Only they can do that. We can be there as a reminder for those who have forgotten their own rage against the war, as an alternative for those mired in inaction, and a place to come and be counted. It takes time to make peace one person at a time.

Chelsea Neighbors United is a fluid group. We are made up of Chelsea residents and friends who believed from the beginning that it was important to oppose the war by having an ongoing presence in our own neighborhood. When we began, we expressed our commitment to be there each week until the war is over and the troops are safely home. Each week, we hand out our newsletter that includes a different signed column by one of our members on a topic related to war.

Our group is a mix of long-time activists and newcomers of all ages. We sometimes have had three generations in the same family standing up against the war. While we have participated in larger actions including citywide marches and riding to Washington, D.C., for national demonstrations, the weekly stand-up is the ongoing work of the group. Big antiwar mobilizations provide a jolt of excitement, but it’s crucial that we find ways to channel that energy on an ongoing basis. As we approach yet another winter, Chelsea Neighbors United remains committed to standing on the street corner with our neighbors for as long as necessary.

Now is not the time to be silent.

Chuck Zlatkin is a founding member of Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War and the legislative and political director of the NY Area Metro Postal Union. He has lived in Chelsea since 1971. For more information, see chelseaneighborsunited.org.



Post your own comments online at the end of each article at indypendent.org or email letters@indypendent.org.

CHANGE IN THE WIND

Responses to “At the Energy Crossroads: The Battle for Wind Energy in the Heart of Appalachia,” Nov. 20:

It is sad to note that the wind-energy project at Coal River Mountain will not be realized due to a mining company. Today more and more states of the United States are looking to renewable energy like wind to meet their future energy needs. It is also the right direction to be heading considering world oil prices are shooting up and the pressure is mounting to decrease greenhouse gases.

—ROG ROSTER

HONEST SAM?

Responses to “The Goodwill of Wal-Mart Women: A Review of To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise,” Nov. 20:

I highly and seriously doubt Sam Walton formulated a plan to use “Christian white women as cheap labor,” as that definitely would have violated his own business principles and practices. I worked for Wal-Mart while putting myself through school and I told them to buzz off after four years. Why? It wasn’t the same Wal-Mart without Sam Walton at the helm. Anybody growing up in the Midwest that knows anything about Wal-Mart, its roots, or Sam Walton, would agree 100 percent.

—K.T.

The thinking that “if Sam were around that would not have happened” is prevalent amongst many, but utter hogwash. Sam Walton was a smart and rapacious capitalist, and he found a way to use Christianity to control his workforce. As the book states, Walton used his white female workforces’ belief in Christianity to get them to focus less on the economic matters of their job. Or at the very least, not raise trouble when it came to their, without a doubt, low wages and thin benefit packages.

—TOM B.

AWARDS

Indypendent Takes Home the Prizes

BY JESSICA LEE

The Indypendent was honored with five awards from the New York Community Media Alliance, which recognizes excellence in New York City community and ethnic media publications for reporting, photography and design at its annual Ippies Award dinner Dec. 3.

Jacob Scheier and John Tarleton received first place for Best Feature Article for “The Anti-Bloomberg: Can I Get an Amen?” an article that explored Rev. Billy Talen’s quixotic mayoral campaign.

For their reporting on the strike at the Stella D’oro Biscuit Co. in the Bronx last spring, Sarah Secunda and Joel Cook were awarded third place for Best Article on Labor Issues. *The Indypendent* was the first publication to publish a feature-length article on the 11-month strike.

Antrim Caskey was awarded third place for Best Photo Essay for “Operation Appalachian Spring,” which documented a West Virginia community’s fight against mountaintop removal coal mining. Her photos depicted a campaign that adopted nonviolent direct action techniques to protest the destructive mining practice.

Second place for Best Photograph was given to Karen Yi for a photo of five children embracing their mother, a Senegalese immigrant who is fighting deportation because she fears her daughters will face possible genital mutilation if they are sent back to Senegal.

Design coordinators Anna Gold and Ryan Dunsmuir took home second place for Best Overall Design for *Indypendent* Issue 126, “Way to Go Wall Street!” Oct. 3, 2009. This issue included an illustrated essay, “How to Wreck the Economy,” by Arun Gupta and Frank Reynoso, which explained the causes of the 2008 financial collapse.



HONORED: *Indypendent* contributors Ryan Dunsmuir, Anna Gold, John Tarleton and Jacob Scheier (from left to right). PHOTO: JAISAL NOOR

The Indypendent is produced by a largely volunteer team of reporters, photographers, editors, artists, designers and website managers. *The Indypendent* has won a total of 50 Ippies since 2003. Other publications that received awards included *The Jewish Daily Forward*, *City Limits*, *Color-Lines*, *El Diario* and *India Express*.

ATLANTIC YARDS TAKES THE COURT

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Downtown Brooklyn may still see the Atlantic Yards sports arena and housing project sprout up, but the recession is more likely to kill it than the lawsuits filed by opponents.

On Dec. 1, the State Court of Appeals refused to review a

lower-court decision denying a challenge to Atlantic Yards on several grounds related to the project's environmental impact statement. That ruling came one week after the court's 6-1 decision on Nov. 24 that the state could use eminent domain to seize property for Atlantic Yards in the "public interest."

Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn and other groups have filed five major lawsuits trying to halt Atlantic Yards. Three have been lost. The other two, the most recent, are still pending.

In the eminent-domain case, the plaintiffs argued that it was illegal for the government to seize property because it would be taken for the private gain of the developer, Forest City Ratner, rather than for public use. The suit also contended that evicting people from homes on the site to clear it for the project

would violate the state constitution, as the new buildings constructed would not be exclusively for low-income residents.

Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, writing the majority opinion, rejected both of those claims. "It is indisputable that the removal of urban blight is a proper, and, indeed, constitutionally sanctioned, predicate for the exercise of the power of eminent domain," he held.

The suit also questioned the Empire State Development Corporation's designation of the area as blighted, "substandard and insanitary" — a prerequisite for its redevelopment to be considered a public purpose.

Judge Lippman had somewhat more sympathy for that claim. "It may be that the bar has now been set too low — that what will now pass as 'blight,' as that expression has come to be understood and used by political appointees to public corporations relying upon studies paid for by developers, should not be permitted to constitute a predicate for the invasion of property rights and the razing of homes and businesses," he wrote.

But ultimately, he concluded, economic underdevelopment and stagnation could legitimately qualify as "blight." Whether that could justify the use of eminent domain, he ruled, "is a matter for the Legislature, not the courts."

In dissent, Judge Robert S. Smith wrote that building offices and apartments for a private developer to rent was not a public purpose, and that "blight" meant a danger to public health and safety, not that "property may be condemned and turned over to a private developer every time a state agency thinks that doing so would improve the neighborhood."

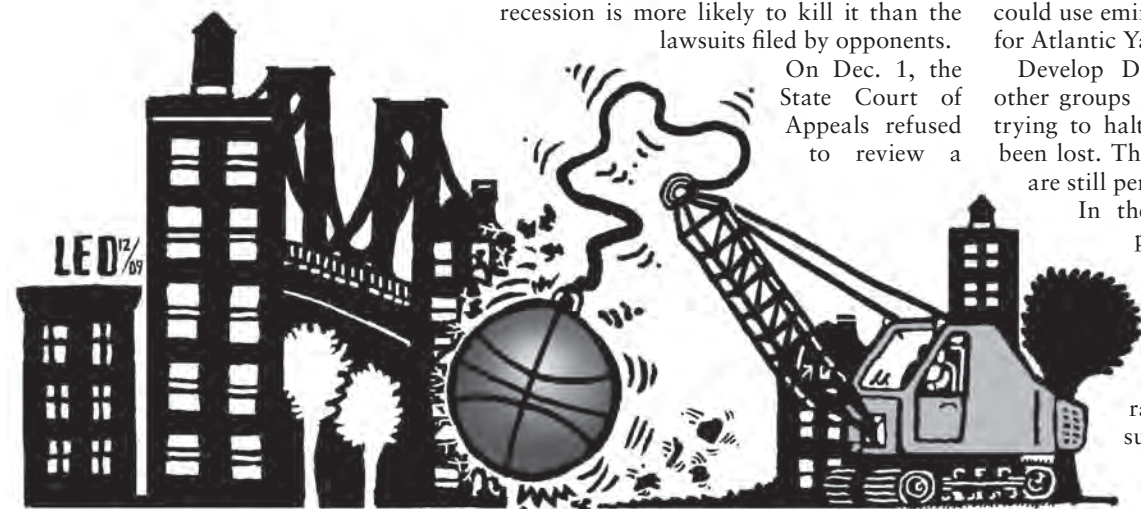
The eminent domain issue may still be unresolved. On Dec. 3, the state's mid-level court, the Appellate Division in Manhattan, ruled that Columbia University could not use eminent domain to claim property in West Harlem for its Manhattanville development. The court said the neighborhood was wrongly defined as blighted.

Forest City Ratner still has to sell bonds to finance the project by end of the year in order to keep its tax exemption for them. On Dec. 1, the two major credit-rating services listed \$500 million in tax-exempt bonds for the proposed arena as "investment grade" — but just barely. Moody's Investor Services rated them as Baa3 and Standard and Poor's as BBB-. Both ratings — the same given to bonds for the new Yankee Stadium and the Mets' Citi Field — are the lowest a bond can get without being considered junk.

The arena, planned to open in 2012 as the new home for the New Jersey Nets, is expected to cost between \$800 million and \$1 billion. The rest of the funds would come from lower-obligation debt, Ratner's own money, and city and state subsidies. The Bloomberg administration has also agreed to let the owners pay off the debt instead of property taxes.

Moody's and Standard and Poor's questioned whether the demand for luxury seats at Nets games — the team opened the season with a National Basketball Association record losing streak — would be enough to make the deal profitable. Many luxury seats at the new Yankee Stadium went empty this year, despite a club that won the World Series.

This article was excerpted from a longer version published by Tenant/Inquilino.



FIRST PERSON

Standing Up to Eminent Theft

BY DANIEL GOLDSTEIN

Six years ago, developer millionaire Bruce Ratner, with the support of Mayor Bloomberg, Gov. Pataki, Sen. Schumer and Brooklyn Borough President Markowitz, unveiled his Atlantic Yards megaproject for Prospect Heights, Brooklyn. It included 16 skyscrapers and a basketball arena to house the now-lousy New Jersey Nets, which Ratner had purchased to facilitate his 22-acre land grab — which was reliant on the government's abuse of eminent domain laws for his enrichment.

Flash forward to December 2009. Atlantic Yards is nothing but a rendering of the arena — a plan without the subsidized "affordable" housing that has been promised for years. There has been no construction. And a once up-and-coming slice of the neighborhood sits half demolished and largely vacant.

So what happened?

The developer, Forest City Ratner, and its government enablers have been slowed by a massive opposition movement led by Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn (DDDB). Ratner's speculative plans have been foiled by the brutal economic recession. But Atlantic Yards, although also wounded, is limping along.

At this point, Forest City Ratner would gain control of 22 acres of prime Brooklyn real estate, on which to construct a money-losing, taxpayer-subsidized arena, and maybe a skyscraper or two filled with primarily luxury condos. The rest of the site (some 16 acres) would sit vacant and blighted. It's ironic. The purported fundamental public benefit of the project, according to the Nov. 24 State Court of Appeal ruling, was the removal of blight.

Instead, Atlantic Yards threatens to create blight where it did not exist.

The Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) must commence a number of legal procedures to take title to the properties and revoke leases. The plaintiffs and DDDB will litigate these procedures every step of the way to thwart the theft of homes and businesses.

Only nine days after the Atlantic Yards decision, the Manhattan Appellate Division ruled in favor of plaintiffs in West Harlem in their challenge to Columbia University's eminent domain abuse. This case also involves the ESDC as the condemning authority.

While a great victory for New Yorkers and the fight against eminent domain abuse, that court's ruling contradicts the higher court's ruling. So, the Atlantic Yards plaintiffs will ask the Court of Appeals to reconsider their case when they hear the Columbia appeal.

Currently, there are three outstanding lawsuits in State Supreme Court. Two were filed by DDDB, and the other by the community

coalition, BrooklynSpeaks. DDDB charges the MTA with violating state statutes when it agreed to sell Ratner the eight-acre Vanderbilt Yards (40 percent of the project site).

In the other case, DDDB and 21 community groups challenge various project approvals made by the ESDC in September, including one that makes the entire affordable housing part of the project contingent on subsidies (meaning the housing is not guaranteed). DDDB also charges that the Empire State Development Corporation must embark upon a supplemental environmental review because the project has been radically altered from its original environmental impact statement.

That's the legal picture. Politically there is an effort to get Gov. Paterson to follow through on a promise he made on Dec. 1 to convene an "objective" review of the project. What he should be reviewing is the labyrinthine financing structure for the project, which is a great risk to New York and its future credit rating. Should there be a default on the tax-exempt arena bond, New York State will be on the hook.

With a state debt of \$57 billion, this is a risk Paterson should not take.

The governor's promise to undertake the long-needed review of the project (no elected official has ever reviewed the project as their votes were not required for its approval) will be meaningless unless he acts to halt the project, pending his review. He has this power, because as governor, ESDC leadership serves at his pleasure.

Only four years ago, Paterson had a stronger stand against the misuse of eminent domain.

In July 2005, in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's notorious *Kelo v. City of New London* eminent domain decision, Paterson, then a state senator (D-Harlem), advocated for a state-wide moratorium on eminent domain.

Gov. Paterson hasn't renewed this call since. Now is a defining moment since it is clear the courts have rendered confused opinions on the issue.

The Court of Appeals' Atlantic Yards ruling gave the state the right to take the plaintiff's properties. However, it did not demand it. Gov. Paterson must not let the ESDC exercise eminent domain. If he does, his legacy will be a Brooklyn version of the travesty that took place when eminent domain laws failed to serve the public and protect property owners in New London, Conn.

Daniel Goldstein is the co-founder and spokesperson of Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn (dddb.net).

Message to Homeless: Pay to Stay



PAYING TO STAY: Linda Contés (pictured) and her husband Manuel were asked to pay \$1,475 a month in rent to the city in May 2009 for living in a homeless shelter. The rent policy was suspended three weeks later, but the city says it will be re-implemented. PHOTO: MARK BAILEY.

BY ALEX KANE

With the New York City shelter system at virtually full capacity and the economy in turmoil, working homeless families may now have yet another thing to worry about: paying the city rent to keep a roof over their heads.

Homeless families would be required to contribute no more than half of their monthly income towards the cost of rent, said Anthony Farmer, a spokesperson for the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. This policy could, according to *The New York Times*, hit up to 2,000 working homeless families on public aid who reside in some 130 family shelters across the city.

Linda Contés, 32, was affected in early May when the city implemented rent requirements for the first time. Living in a room she shared with her husband, Manuel, 30, at the Concourse Residence shelter in the Bronx, she received a notice stating they would have to begin paying \$1,475 a month in rent, an amount they could not afford. Contés was unemployed and Manuel worked as a part-time sanitation associate at a hospital that only paid him \$1,400 a month.

Similar notices were sent out to more than 500 working homeless families around the city, according to *The New York Times*. But the policy, which was initially implemented due to state regulations,

was suspended three weeks later due to bureaucratic mishaps, such as charging exorbitant rents due to miscalculations.

Homeless families who fail to comply with the rent requirement can face eviction, although they are able to contest these payments at a hearing.

Since the suspension, however, Department of Homeless Services (DHS) officials have made it clear that the policy will be re-implemented, though they have not announced a date.

"We continue to work with the state on a program that fulfills our legal obligation, while also making sense to families in our shelter system," DHS Commissioner Robert Hess said in a statement to *The Independent*.

Homeless advocates continue to blast the policy, saying that charging the working homeless rent is counterproductive and punitive.

"The requirement that homeless people pay for the cost of shelter is deeply misguided and ultimately is going to result in homeless people staying in shelters for longer periods of time," said Patrick Markee, a senior policy analyst with the Coalition for the Homeless.

There are nearly 40,000 homeless adults and children in the shelter system — the highest number since the Great Depression — according to the coalition.

DHS says they implemented the policy because of a 2007 audit requiring the city to pay more than \$2 million to the state for

not enforcing income contribution requirements. The policy has its roots in a 1995 state regulatory change ordered by former Gov. George Pataki's administration.

Homeless advocates say the city and state's decision to require employed homeless families to pay for shelter is a reflection of their misguided approach to homelessness as a personal, rather than systemic, issue.


"People go to shelters because they are desperate and they are poor," said Piper Hoffman, the director of advocacy for the Partnership for the Homeless. If the policy is re-implemented, it would be "grievous mistake," she said.

A bill that would prohibit the charging of rent to working homeless families staying in shelters was passed by the New York State Assembly June 22 (A. 8353-D), and is currently in the State Senate's Rules Committee. Assemblymember Keith Wright (D-Harlem) is the main sponsor of the bill.


Sen. Daniel Squadron (D-Lower Manhattan, Brooklyn) is the sponsor of the companion bill in the State Senate (S. 5605-A), and has 18 co-sponsors, according to a Squadron spokesperson.

While Contés has left the shelter system behind, she still worries about how other homeless families will fare.

"When you're in the shelter, you have to do what you're told," Contés said. "It's like being in jail ... If they say you have to pay rent, and you say no, there's going to be consequences."



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Bronxnet Channel 67
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Link TV
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“A WARNING TO LAWYERS”

Feds Nix Bail, Jail Radical Attorney

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

The government's seven-year legal vendetta against Lynne Stewart entered a new phase on Nov. 19 when the outspoken human rights attorney entered the Manhattan Correctional Center

after a federal appeals court revoked her bail and ordered her trial judge to reconsider her “breathtakingly low” sentence.

Stewart was convicted in February 2005 of aiding terrorism by smuggling a press

release from her imprisoned client, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, to his followers in Egypt. The case against Stewart revolved around her refusal to abide by Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) placed on Abdel Rahman, who is serving a life sentence for terrorism-related crimes.

Stewart was sentenced in October 2006 by trial Judge John M. Koeltl to 28 months in jail. The government had sought a maximum 30-year sentence, but Judge Koeltl opted for a more lenient punishment, noting Stewart's long record of serving poor and underprivileged clients.

Stewart's relatively light sentence outraged her critics. Now, she must remain in custody while her lawyers argue what sentence is appropriate and while a new presentencing report is prepared by the U.S. Probation Department. She is due to be re-sentenced on April 22. The government is asking for a “terrorism enhancement” which would result in a 30-year sentence.

THE PRESS RELEASE

Stewart's legal troubles date back to spring 2000 when she forwarded the press release from Abdel Rahman to a *Reuters* correspondent in Egypt. In the press release, Abdel Rahman urged his followers in the Islamic Group (IG) to reconsider a three-year ceasefire they had observed in relation to the Egyptian government. This breached the SAMs agreement that Stewart had signed. SAMs restrict lawyers from relaying messages from inmates deemed too dangerous to communicate with the outside world.

Stewart took on Rahman as a client at the urging of the late renowned attorney William Kunstler. She testified that her goal was “to keep the Sheik alive in the memory of his followers,” in hopes that, through political channels, she could get him transferred to Egypt to finish his sentence. No violent acts were carried out by the IG following the issuing of Abdel Rahman's press release.

Noted criminal defense lawyer Ronald Kuby has said that it was “not uncommon” before the 9/11 attacks for lawyers to circumvent SAMs restrictions.

In April 2002, the government came af-

ter Stewart with a vengeance, summoning all the fears present in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Stewart's office was raided by counter-terrorism federal agents, she was hit with multiple felony counts and virtually branded as a traitor. She was the first lawyer to be indicted on terrorism-related charges, raising fears that defense lawyers who represent unpopular clients would be increasingly targeted by the government. Much of the government's case was based on secret tapes of her conversations with her client.

“This case would never have been brought except for the fear generated and the advantage that the Bush administration was taking of it by the events on Sept. 11, 2001,” said former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark.

The scapegoating of Stewart continued in the trial when the prosecution was allowed to introduce videotapes of Osama bin Laden in the courtroom, even though neither Stewart or her client had a relationship to the Al Qaeda leader. After a seven-month trial and 13 days of jury deliberation, Stewart was found guilty. Her co-defendants Ahmed Sattar, who acted as a paralegal for Abdel-Rahman, and Mohammed Yousry, an Arabic translator were also found guilty. Sattar was sentenced to 28 years in prison while Yousry received a 20-month sentence.

The government appealed Stewart's 28-month sentence as too low. Stewart's lawyers made a cross-appeal arguing that the SAMs were an unconstitutional infringement of an inmate's right to receive and transmit ideas, as well as a violation of the attorney-client privilege. Her appeal was denied.

The history of this case demonstrates that the real target of the prosecution is the right to counsel. Pointing to the upcoming terrorism trial in New York of five Guantanamo prisoners, Stewart noted as much at a press conference held immediately after her bail was revoked.

“This was a warning to lawyers to do it the government's way,” Stewart said, “to pay attention to what the government rules are, not to even stray up to the line, otherwise you will end up like Lynne Stewart.”



HUMAN RIGHTS ATTORNEY LYNNE STEWART. PHOTO: BUD KOROTZER

In Her Own Voice

Lynne Stewart wrote to supporters shortly after she was imprisoned at the Manhattan Correctional Center (MCC) Nov. 19.

Dear Sisters and Brothers, Friends and Supporters:

Well, the moment we all hoped would never come is upon us. Good bye to a good cup of coffee in the morning, a soft chair, the hugs of grandchildren and the smaller pleasures in life. I must say I am being treated well and that is due to my lawyer team and your overwhelming support.

While I have received “celebrity” treatment here in MCC— high visibility— conditions for the other women are deplorable. Medical care, food, education, recreation are all at minimal levels. If it weren't for the unqualified bonds of sisterhood and the commissary, it would be even more dismal.

My fellow prisoners have supplied me with books and crosswords, a warm (it is cold in here most of the time) sweat shirt and pants, treats from the commissary, and of course, jailhouse humor. Most important, many of them know of my work and have a deep reservoir of can I say it? Respect.

I continue to answer the questions put to me by them, I also can't resist commenting on the TV news or what is happening on the floor— a little L.S. politics always! (Smile) to open hearts and minds!...

I want to say that the show of support outside the courthouse on Thursday as I was “transported” is so cherished by me. The broad organizational representation was breathtaking and the love and politics expressed (the anger too) will keep me nourished through this...

Love Struggle, Lynne Stewart

For more, see lynnestewart.org.

After 25 Years, Justice is Due

By JAISAL NOOR

Hundreds of students from Parsons The New School for Design used their bodies to spell out the words D-O-W in Union Square Dec. 4 in a “die-in” to bring attention to the 25th anniversary of the disaster in Bhopal, India. At midnight on Dec. 2, 1984, a 27-ton cloud of lethal gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal. At least 8,000 people died from chemical exposure within three days, leaving hundreds of thousands of victims to suffer long-lasting health problems. Protests took place around the world in early December calling for accountability from the Indian government and Dow Chemical Company, which bought Union Carbide in 1999, and claims it is not responsible. A newly released study from the Bhopal Medical Appeal reveals that chemical levels remain dangerously high in the area's drinking water. Claiming it is now safe, the Indian government had announced plans to open up the site of the pesticide plant for the 25th Anniversary, but recently reversed its decision after protests from survivors. Indian courts have charged former Union Carbide CEO Warren Anderson with manslaughter, but the United States has refused to extradite him. He lives in Long Island. For more information, visit the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (bhopal.net) and The Yes Men (theyesmen.org). PHOTO: NANCY BROGDEN, THEYESMEN.ORG



One People, One Net

By JOSHUA BREITBART

For many of us, the diversity and abundance of information on the internet has become part of our daily lives. We assume that we will always be able to view the websites of our choosing and even upload our own photos and videos onto the web.

However, to those of us at People's Production House, an organization that teaches radio journalism to immigrants and public school students, we can't take net neutrality — the principle that prohibits discrimination of content and applications on the Internet — for granted. Our group includes lessons on net neutrality as part of our year-long courses in public schools because without it, our students could soon be making entertaining and informative radio pieces without the ability to share them online.

With the recent introduction of Resolution 712-A, the New York City Council has taken up this important issue. While we don't hear much about it in the news, the current debate over net neutrality will determine the future of how we communicate.

Two companies alone — Verizon and AT&T — have spent more than \$20 million on federal lobbying this year trying to thwart the Internet Freedom Preservation Act of 2009 (HR 3458), a bill in Congress that would enshrine net neutrality in law. Resolution 712-A, if the Council passes it, would endorse this bill. The organization

Free Press has submitted more than 4,000 signatures of New Yorkers who support the resolution.

Net neutrality was the law of the land until 2005 and it brought us many benefits. Skype is an internet-based voice service that is extremely popular among many immigrants who wish to keep in touch with family around the world. Skype competes with the voice services of cable companies like Optimum and Time Warner. Without net neutrality, those companies could have kept Skype from launching by blocking it or charging the companies exorbitant fees that would be passed on to users.

Opponents of net neutrality point to the existing variety of online voice services as evidence that the system works. They call net neutrality a "solution in search of a problem," but the problem is staring anyone who owns an internet-enabled mobile phone right in the face. As it is now, most cellular phone companies — who have so far been exempt from net neutrality — block Skype from operating on their networks so people are forced to use their minutes for calls rather than their data connections.

This is particularly harmful to low-income people, immigrants, people of color and seniors who are all more likely to have a mobile phone than a broadband-enabled personal computer or laptop. While laptop

users can use whatever chat or voice service they want — thanks, so far, to net neutrality — mobile phone users can only access the parts of the Internet that their service providers approve. We need to extend net neutrality protections to wireless networks, not allow these kinds of discriminatory practices to spread.

At a Nov. 20 City Council committee hearing on Resolution 712, the National Cable & Telecommunications Association — big cable's lobbying wing — argued that we should trust them to manage the internet without government oversight and resolve any problems on a case-by-case basis. But in 2007, when cable television and internet service behemoth Comcast was found to be blocking a service called BitTorrent, which is popular for downloading movies, the company at first denied it. Then they went to court to challenge the Federal Communications Commission's ability to intervene. Now that Comcast is buying NBC Universal, it will have even more reason to block

competitors' content from reaching their 15 million internet service subscribers.

For journalists, like those we teach at People's Production House, this is a scary thought. The NBC corporation has been broadcasting its content since 1926, while our trainees are just now finding the power of distributing their own media through the internet. They're finding new ways of engaging in civic life, new job skills, and a new sense of community, locally and globally. Without net neutrality, Comcast and other corporate giants could take that power away.

The full City Council will likely vote on Resolution 712-A on Dec. 21. New York City will send a powerful message to our representatives in Washington that we need an open internet. We need net neutrality.

Joshua Breitbart is the policy director for People's Production House. For more information about net neutrality and what you can do, visit savetheinternet.com and peoplesproductionhouse.org.



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TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras—A few days prior to the Nov. 29 elections in Honduras, Francisco Varela, a homeless man who is a fixture outside one of the ubiquitous Espresso Americano establishments in the Honduran capital, was sporting a T-shirt for National Party presidential candidate and soon-to-be victor Porfirio (Pepe) Lobo. The shirt bore a slogan championing Lobo as an agent for change.

When asked what change he would bring, Varela insisted Lobo would eliminate gang culture in Honduras either by imposing the death penalty or by imprisoning gang members for so long that they couldn't reproduce. No doubt, violence related to drug trafficking bedevils Honduras, but the barefoot Varela did not explain how such an agenda was more beneficial to him than getting access to housing, shoes or food.

That the homeless Varela was backing draconian solutions usually espoused by the well-to-do and the corporate media is telling. The current regime, which came to power after staging a coup against President Manuel Zelaya June 28, has been shunned by most countries, except most notably the Obama administration, and has ruled largely through violence and intimidation. By controlling the media, through tactics like repeated shutdowns and sabotage (including pouring acid on the transmitters of anti-coup Radio Globo and Channel 36), the coup-makers have managed to convince some of the poor that their interests are being served.

The coup-makers' concern for the Honduran people, who subsist on an average of \$154 a month, was on full display during the Dec. 2 session of the National Congress. It had convened to consider whether to restore Zelaya to office for the remainder of his term, which

lasts until Jan. 27, 2010. During the nine-hour session, congress members, who rejected Zelaya's restitution by a vote of 111 to 14, invoked "the Honduran people," "the poor," "democracy," "god," and Venezuelan President "Hugo Chávez" so frequently that banning these terms would have made the debate last about as long as a coffee break.

Congress members also professed their desire for a "reconciliation of the Honduran family," but they did not appear to consider that 50 to 70 percent of the family abstained from voting in the Nov. 29 election, according to independent observers.

On election night, the Honduran Supreme Electoral Tribunal reported a turnout of more than 61 percent, despite announcing that its vote-counting system had failed. Prior to the election, it had spent half-a-million dollars to purchase 20,000 cell phones for use by officials at polling places across the country to orally report results to the Tribunal's main computing center. How this was supposed to work in a country where "cell phone reception" is largely nonexistent or how the participation rate was calculated so rapidly, despite the technical breakdown, remains a mystery.

I visited several polling sites around Tegucigalpa on election day, and in none did I find the turnout the coup-makers (or "*golpistas*," as they are known) were claiming. In fact, voting was extended by an hour, not because there was a rush at the polls, as the *golpistas* said, but because they apparently hoped more people would trickle in.

If there is a specter haunting the coup regime, it is not Zelaya, who, since his return in September, has been holed up in the Brazilian Embassy under siege by the Honduran police and military. (As *The Independent* goes to press, Zelaya is attempting to negotiate a departure from the country.)

Similarly, the top concern for the broad-based resistance is not Zelaya, but the "*Constituyente*," or a National Constituent Assembly to rewrite the constitution, which is skewed toward the Honduran elite. It was, of course, after Zelaya pushed for a nonbinding referendum in order to gauge support for such an assembly that the business class and military launched their coup.

Presumably in order to avoid discussing why a nonbinding referendum was such a danger, the *golpistas* recast the proposed ballot into a bid by Zelaya to install himself as eternal president of Honduras in violation of constitutional articles prohibiting leaders from serving more than one four-year term.

The concern for the constitution, however, did not extend to the coup itself, the exile of Zelaya or installation of Roberto Micheletti as the new president, all illegal acts under the constitution. And after two days in power, Micheletti signed a decree suspending constitutional rights such as personal liberty, freedom of association and assembly and the right to leave, enter and stay within the national territory.

It is Chávez who haunts Honduras, or at least the rich. Pro-coup congress members are fond of proclaiming, "This country does not belong to Chávez." Anti-coup Congressman César Ham agreed, wagering that it is the 10 percent of the Honduran population who possess 90 percent of the wealth that really own Honduras.

One pro-resistance acquaintance who works at a *golpista* newspaper said that the wealthy fear Honduras will be transformed into the next Venezuela, and for those who have two houses, an allegedly socialist government, "will take away one of them."

In August, Honduran Army Commander Miguel Angel García indirectly invoked Chávez when he announced that the armed forces had prevented the arrival of socialism to "the heart of the United States."

What the Honduran elite really feared was Zelaya's decision to bring Honduras into the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America, a Venezuelan initiative guaranteeing more affordable fuel and medicines, among other items, for participating countries. Or Zelaya's move to increase the urban minimum wage by 60 percent, to \$290 a month. Or his veto of a congressional bill that would have banned the sale of the morning-after pill. (This measure reportedly infuriated Opus Dei, the fascistic Roman Catholic organization, which is believed to count prominent *golpistas* among its adherents.)

On the morning of the election, I visited Colonia Estados Unidos, a district by the name of The United States on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa marked by mangled dirt roads and limited infrastructure. At the voting center I encountered Lobo supporter Oscar Izaguirre, who identified himself as a member of the National Party and president of the center. He quickly invoked the alleged expansion of Venezuelan socialism and went beyond typical *golpista* warnings about Chávez, reminding me of the necessity of intervention in Vietnam by his

Honduras' Crossroads

ADAPTED FROM REPORTS BY BELÉN FERNÁNDEZ. PHOTOS BY TIM RUSSO.



district's namesake.

Izaguirre said he wished to rename his district as punishment for the current "U.S. intervention in Honduran affairs," *golpista* code for the U.S. policy of nominally admonishing the coup regime while permitting its consolidation of power. He didn't say if he considered the U.S. use of Honduras as launching pad for the contra war against Nicaragua in the 1980s to be a case of "intervention."

Most international election observers, such as the United Nations, Carter Center and Organization of American States, refused to monitor the election given the repressive atmosphere. Human rights groups have documented a long list of "grave violations" by security forces: murders, disappearances, torture, attacks on journalists, widespread detentions and assaults on nonviolent protests, including one on a resistance march on election day in the northern city of San Pedro Sula.

It took the U.S. Department of State only hours to claim the vote met "international standards for fairness and transparency." Perhaps even more telling, U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens was applauded at a Tegucigalpa voting center where he had accompanied a member of his security team to vote.

Outside another voting center, Colonia Kennedy, a district in Tegucigalpa, was a small group of middle-aged resistance members. After telling a Univisión television crew that they did not consider the elections legitimate, they were lambasted by onlookers, to which they replied with chants of "Dignity! Dignity!" The exchange resulted in two pickup trucks full of police being called in to monitor the resistance members.

That the resistance continues is remarkable. In the weeks following Zelaya's ouster, large anti-coup marches, some reportedly numbering more than 150,000 Hondurans, filled the streets. The coup inadvertently united isolated sectors from lawyers and artists to farmers and feminists. Teachers have played a central role and cancelled Thursday and Friday classes for

It took the U.S. Department of State only hours to claim the vote met "international standards for fairness and transparency."

weeks so they could participate in resistance activities.

Resistance member Jeremías López, a primary school teacher in the Honduran department of Olancho, credits the coup with having provided the impetus for an unprecedented level of spontaneous and large-scale social organization in Honduras.

The strategy of the leading resistance group, the National Front of Popular Resistance Against the Coup d'Etat, has centered on mass mobilizations and even included cross-country marches. Many were critical of Zelaya, but nearly all supported the National Constituent Assembly. The marches diminished over time, however, as the *golpistas* stoked a climate of intimidation and terror.

Now that they have the Obama administration's blessings, the *golpistas* seem to hope that Honduras will be able to proceed with business as usual. But for the resistance the elections constitute a closure to the first phase of the struggle; it is now regrouping and restructuring its strategy.

The fact that slogans like "No to elections" abounded on the façades of voting centers on election day suggests that a regime that is incapable of erasing graffiti will be even less adept at erasing a collective experience of resistance.



PHOTOS FROM TOP LEFT CLOCKWISE:

- 1 People gather at a weekly Popular Assembly meeting July 19 at the Workers of Beverage and Similar Union headquarters to vote to maintain the resistance and daily marches, despite repression.
- 2 At a police barricade, demonstrators raise their hands to show they are unarmed July 24. Thousands of protesters defied as many as 20 police and military roadblocks near the Nicaragua border to greet ousted President Manuel Zelaya, when he made his second attempt to return to Honduras.
- 3 Indigenous Lenca women chain themselves to the gates of the cathedral in Tegucigalpa, invoking a desire to break free from the chains of colonialism, and calling for an end to the military coup and the establishment of a National Assembly to rewrite the constitution. The women reached the capitol after a five day walk from their communities in western Honduras.
- 4 Thousands of Zelaya supporters and members of the Honduran resistance movement rally around police barriers outside the National Congress during its vote 111 to 14 against reinstating Zelaya Dec. 12.
- 5 Standing under the Honduran flag, Zelaya addresses his supporters on Sept. 21 outside the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa, which is surrounded by a five-block military perimeter.

THE FOG OF WAR



GROUNDING: Soldiers land in Kabul, Afghanistan. PHOTO: [FLICKR.COM/STARTLED RABBIT III](https://www.flickr.com/photos/startledrabbit/) . ©

EDITED BY ARUN GUPTA

Anand Gopal has gone where few others reporters have been.

Currently correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* based in Kabul, Afghanistan, Gopal embedded with the Taliban in 2008, giving him unique insight into a force that was swept away by the U.S. invasion after the 9/11 attacks but still rules much of the countryside and has battled Western forces to a stalemate.

In his writings, Gopal explains that while every “suicide attack and kidnapping is usually attributed to ‘the Taliban’ ... the insurgency is far from monolithic.” The United States is battling a diverse group of fighters, Gopal says. “There are the shadowy, kohl-eyed mul-lahs and head-bobbing religious students, of course, but there are also erudite university students; poor, illiterate farmers, and veteran anti-Soviet commanders. The movement is a mélange of nationalists, Islamists and bandits that fall uneasily into three or four main factions. The factions themselves are made up of competing commanders with differing ideologies and strategies who nonetheless agree on one essential goal: kicking out the foreigners.”

Gopal notes the Taliban are drawn from the Pashtun ethnic group. “They are motivated by joblessness, bad government and U.S. military violence. They have a good deal of support from the locals and they are a different breed of Taliban from the ones that were there in the 1990s.”

This past June, at the Socialism 2009 conference in Chicago, Gopal spoke about what motivates the Taliban to fight, how the U.S. reconstruction effort has failed, why neither side can prevail, the role of Pakistan and what further U. S. escalation portends.

He began by describing a group of Taliban he embedded with while reporting for *The Christian Science Monitor*. Apart from the commander of the group, who had been “a low-level government functionary” during the Taliban regime, there were three “very young Muslims guys, too young to even remember the Soviet experience, who joined the Taliban because they didn’t have any jobs. They had a small plot of land; nothing grew because of the drought. The Taliban pays their fighters up to \$200 or \$300 a month to fight so they picked up a gun and started fighting against the Americans.”

The following text is adapted from that talk and various articles by, and interviews with, Anand Gopal.

Two Taliban fighters I met directly experienced American military violence, which is why they joined the insurgent movement. One person, he went home one day and found his house split in two and six family members killed and promptly picked up a weapon and joined the insurgents. The other person also had his family members killed.

When I was with the Taliban, we would sit up in the mountains and they would sleep all day and come out at night with their Kalashnikovs and RPGs. They would come down to the roadside and wait for Afghan police or soldiers to drive by, and then they would shoot them with the RPGs and run back up into the mountains. This is what they would do every single day. It’s a typical guerilla strategy.

When the Americans invaded in 2001 most Afghans welcomed the United States with open arms. Even among people who are in the Taliban now, they tell me that when the Americans first came they wanted them there because the Americans made a series of promises.

The Americans promised jobs. This is in a country where after nearly 25 years of war there’s no economy to speak of. They promised development and reconstruction, an accountable and responsible government and security.

The reason the situation has completely deteriorated is that the Americans have utterly failed in meeting every single one of their promises.

Today, more than half the country is unemployed. In many places the actual unem-

ployment rate is much higher. There are villages I’ve gone to where no one has a job. All the men are sitting outside and passing their time doing nothing. Forty percent of the country earns less than \$14 a month and nearly 50 percent is unable to procure enough food to meet their minimum daily requirements.

In the mountains that surround the capital of Kabul live hundreds of thousands of people, most of whom don’t have any jobs. A lot of these people are crippled from the various wars — the Russian war, the current war — and the women are prevented from working.

Usually they’ll send their children down from the mountains into the city to either beg or work some small job. In these streets near the mountains you’ll see hundreds of children hawking trinkets, selling gum or outright begging. Many of these children are three or four years old, and they’re the main breadwinners of the family.

You’ll occasionally see men trying to sell their daughters. In one case there was a large refugee settlement outside of Kabul with a lot of people who are victims of U.S. airstrikes. One day, I saw a father standing there crying his eyes out. With him was a young girl. Some other refugees came up and asked him why are you crying? He said I have to sell my daughter because things have just gotten that desperate.

These other Afghans, who have no money, found whatever money they could and gave it to him and said don’t sell your daughter. But most people aren’t that lucky. Young girls are often sold as a way either to meet debts or just to earn money in any way.

NO DEVELOPMENT, BUT PLENTY OF CORRUPTION

To bring jobs, of course, you need development. The United States is spending \$100 million a day in Afghanistan but 95 percent goes toward the military. Only 5 percent is earmarked for aid or development. Even that would be a reasonable amount, 5 percent of \$100 million for aid.

But the problem is, of the 5 percent, 86 cents out of every dollar that the U.S. spends

on aid comes back into the United States through contracts to U.S. corporations, through salaries to contractors and so on.

With all that money, the United Nations ranks Afghanistan as the fifth-least developed country in the world, and that’s a drop from 2004. If you move even 10 miles outside of Kabul, moving south, you enter a time warp. There’s no paved roads, no electricity, no running water. Some of the villages are so disconnected that people are living like they’ve lived for hundreds of years with very little change.

When I was with the U.S. troops earlier this year, we entered a village and the villagers thought that we were the Russians. They didn’t even know that the Russians have left.

The Americans promised to bring in democracy and an accountable government. In reality you have one of the most corrupt governments in the world. The minister of counternarcotics is reputed to be one of the biggest drug traffickers in the country.

On top of that the Americans are killing lots of people, many of them civilians.

I was out with the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, N.Y., in the spring of 2009. At one point we were caught in a firefight. On one side were the troops, and on the other side the Taliban were there, firing back and forth. In the middle of that a car sped away, so the soldiers turned and started firing at the car and sprayed it full of bullets. And the car sat there mangled. All of a sudden the door swung open and an old man came out holding a baby and the baby had been killed.

This wasn’t reported; this is a daily occurrence. It’s important not to underestimate the effect these killings have in eroding support for the United States and building support for the Taliban.

THE STORY OF A SUICIDE BOMBER

I want to tell you about one child, probably around 15 years old. I’ll call him Zubair.

One day about three years ago, Zubair was walking home from school. As he approached his house he saw just shards of concrete and mangled wires. A U.S. airstrike had hit the house a couple of hours before.

As Obama commits 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, reporter Anand Gopal makes sense of a war without end.

His home was completely destroyed and he panicked and he started sifting through the rubble, looking for family members.

He came across his mother's severed head in the rubble. At the time he was maybe 11 or 12. He didn't scream. Instead, the sight induced a sort of catatonia; he picked up the head, cradled it in his arms, and started walking aimlessly. He carried on like this for days, until tribal elders pried the head from his hands and convinced him to deal with his loss more constructively. He decided he would get revenge by becoming a suicide bomber and inflicting a loss on some American family as painful as the one he had just suffered.

He joined the Taliban. He was an ideal subject for a suicide bombing because he's young, he's in a distraught mental state and he feels like he has nothing left to live for.

He trained in the suicide camp for a couple of months and finally they dispatched him to Kabul. One morning, he made his way, as directed, toward an office building where American advisors were training their Afghan counterparts, but before he could detonate his vest, a pair of sharp-eyed intelligence officers spotted him and wrestled him to the ground.

Today Zubair is living in an Afghan prison with Al Qaeda members and all sorts of other people. His story is not unique. If you visit the prisons you can see that many people have the same sort of experience.

A WORSE LIFE FOR WOMEN

For the majority of Afghan women, life is either exactly the same as it was under the Taliban, or it's worse. If you travel outside of Kabul you'll see only men and boys outside, there are no women or girls anywhere to be seen. In these areas women are not allowed to leave the house and they are not allowed to find work and most women cannot go to school after puberty, if at all.

The statistics are bleak. Eighty-seven percent of Afghan women complain of domestic violence; 60 to 80 percent of all marriages are forced; 57 percent of brides are

under the age of 16. Afghan women have the lowest literacy rate and the highest suicide rate of any country in the world. The average life expectancy of an Afghan woman is about 42 or 43 years old.

The hospitals are full of cases of the latest epidemic, which is self-immolation. I'll tell you the story of one young woman, Fatima. She was in her home one day when her uncle broke in and raped her. She told her parents, who said, "Well, this is horrible. We need to regain our family's honor in some way." They decided that the best course of action would be for her to light herself on fire.

The mother poured gasoline on her and then Fatima lit a match and set herself on fire. Today she's sitting in a hospital ward and she looks like a slice of pizza with bandages.

I go to the hospitals in rural areas and ask the women, would you prefer living back under the Taliban or do you prefer the American occupation? Almost across the board they say they preferred the Taliban.

THE PAKISTANI TALIBAN

There is an indigenous insurgency in Pakistan that is distinct from and independent of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is a society where there are landlords who have had immense wealth for generations and large numbers of dispossessed and disenfranchised people. It's also a society in which the Pakistani state has failed to meet the needs of its citizens.

There's a generation of Pakistanis, especially Pashtuns in the tribal areas, who have grown up with a radicalized interpretation of Islam, thanks to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, the CIA and Saudi Arabia, which promoted this in their war against the Soviet Union.

Afghanistan is not marked by the extreme class inequalities that you see in Pakistan, not to the same degree. In Afghanistan, everybody is poor, even the landlords are poor.

The Pakistani Taliban plays on the class anger. In many cases they'll attack landlords and break up their holdings. Many people view them as Robin Hood figures. In Af-



ghanistan, the Taliban ally with the landlords and with the tribal chiefs.

The goals of the two movements are different. The Afghan Taliban's aim for the most part is to kick out the foreigners from their country. The Pakistani Taliban's aims are a lot more complex.

The Pakistani Taliban is at war with the state of Pakistan. When I first started going to the Pashtun areas in Pakistan a couple of years ago, everybody loved the Taliban. They were viewed as a moral force to get rid of the corrupt government and redistribute wealth. Everybody hated the Americans and loved the Taliban.

Since this spring, there has been a perceptible shift. The Pakistani Taliban were close to the height of their power, but they seem to have overplayed their hand. First, their rather brutal regime induced a popular backlash — many ordinary Pashtuns in these areas who initially supported the Taliban started

to turn against them. Second, they moved close to the province of Punjab, which is the heart of Pakistan and the seat of the ruling establishment.

This induced a backlash by the state, which dealt a swift defeat to Taliban forces in Bajaur agency and later moved into Swat and removed Taliban rule there. The setbacks for the Pakistani Taliban have continued. Last summer, their leader Baitullah Mehsud was killed by a U.S. drone strike, and he was the glue holding together a very fractured movement.

THE END GAME

Every time the Americans come into an area the bombing increases. After Obama sent 21,000 troops earlier this year, there was a 60 percent increase in violence over last year, which was already at record levels.

Despite the fact that every time the troops go into an area the violence increases and Pashtuns don't want the Americans there, Obama is still putting more troops into the situation.

What's the end game in all of this if they just keep throwing troops into it and the Pashtuns keep fighting back?

The Taliban will not be able to just keep spreading and getting larger every single year until one day they eventually take over the country. The Taliban in Afghanistan have support only in the Pashtun areas. They lack the roots and the support to move beyond the Pashtuns to other groups.

Neither will the Taliban march into Kabul. They lack the ability to take over an urban area. They're a rural guerrilla force and Kabul is not a Pashtun city.

At the same time, the United States is not going to be able to go into the Pashtun areas and dislodge the Taliban. The experience of the last eight years of war and occupation is not going to be erased very easily. The Taliban have real support.

We're faced with a war of attrition where you're going to see every year more and more Afghan civilians killed and more and more U.S. soldiers coming back in body bags.



AGAINST THE WALL: While life has improved for some women, such as these schoolgirls in Kabul, for most women their situation has deteriorated since the U.S.-led invasion began. Just like under the Taliban, women remain prisoners in their homes, but now they suffer the brunt of the war. PHOTO: FLICKR.COM/MICHAEL FOLEY

Clock is Ticking in Copenhagen

By JESSICA LEE

The COP-15 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Dec. 7–18 is generating huge amounts of news coverage in the mainstream media but little of it is adding to the public's understanding of the issues involved. The goal of the conference is to craft a new agreement on carbon emissions to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

The trouble with negotiating such a treaty is rooted in the conflicting views of this global problem — a struggle over a narrative that stretches back 500 years in the quest for riches and power by countries that became our contemporary polluting powerhouses.

The mainstream media do not provide an adequate social, political and historical context with which to understand the Copenhagen talks.

As *The Independent* goes to press, climate justice activists are gearing up for massive nonviolent civil disobedience to disrupt the conference, the United States has been caught undermining the process in its efforts to push its own agenda, and the divide between the rich and poor countries in the negotiations is widening.

Here are a few things to keep your eye on:

KLIMAFORUM 2009

A broad coalition of environmental groups organized KlimaForum09, a two-week peoples' climate summit taking place in

downtown Copenhagen. "We are here to represent ordinary concerned citizens from all around the world," its manifesto says. "We DON'T represent vested interests such as bureaucrats, politicians, business or civil servants." The forum is a hub for networking, skill-sharing, music, theater and movement building. "The fear is that the official climate deal likely to come out of the U.N. conference in Copenhagen will be focused on 'technological fixes' and biased toward the interests of the corporate lobby and the rich and powerful nations."

G77+CHINA

The United Nations Group of 77 (G77) is poised to apply pressure across the equator. Established in 1964 by 77 developing countries from the global South, the group has now expanded to 132 countries. China has



joined the group for the climate talks. The G77+China will be pressing the developed nations to drastically reduce their carbon dioxide emissions, help fund clean technology initiatives and pay climate reparations (payments made to those affected by global warming who did little to cause it). Environmental and development NGOs accused the United States and Europe of using underhanded diplomatic tactics ahead of the climate conference.

Shortly after Hillary Clinton visited the Philippines in November, Philippine President Gloria Arroyo sided with the United States on emission cuts and dismissed Bernarditas de Castro Muller, a key G77 negotiator, from the nation's delegation to Copenhagen, as reported by the *Guardian* Dec. 4. "The negotiators of industrialized countries are really afraid of Ditas Muller ... They want her out of the picture so that they can push their own agenda," Chito Tionko of the Civil Society Organizations Working Group on Climate Change and Development told *GMA News*. Sudan, which chairs the G77, immediately added Muller to the Sudanese delegation.

The G77 reacted strongly Dec. 9 when documents leaked to the press showed that a secret agreement was in the works to set unequal limits on per capita carbon emissions by 2050, meaning that rich countries could pollute nearly twice as much per capita as poor countries.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS

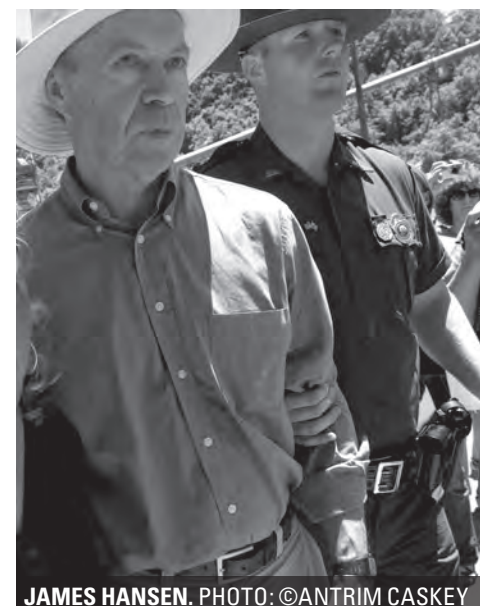
A broad coalition of indigenous communities is demanding to be included in climate change negotiations and that the new climate treaty honor the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"We only have one Mother Earth, and



those most responsible for climate change also hold the greatest responsibility for her protection," said the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change in a statement Dec. 7. "The protection of the collective rights of indigenous peoples must be guaranteed, including the recognition of our roles and contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation through our traditional knowledge, innovations and practices."

The U.S.-based Indigenous Environmental Network is not only pushing for "strong targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also demanding effective, fair and equitable methods to address the climate issue." The group calls for the elimination of carbon markets from any future climate treaty because of their dire consequence for indigenous communities. For example, the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) and the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM) pilot projects have sold forests to industrialized societies as greenhouse gas pollution licenses, taking away the autonomy of indigenous peoples who live there.



JAMES HANSEN

NASA's climate expert James Hansen says he wants the negotiations at Copenhagen to fail. "This is analogous to the issue of slavery faced by Abraham Lincoln or the issue of Nazism faced by Winston Churchill," he told *United Press International* Dec. 9. "On those kind of issues you cannot compromise. You can't say let's reduce slavery, let's find a compromise and reduce it 50 percent or reduce it 40 percent." Hansen told the *Guardian* March 18 that "the democratic process doesn't quite seem to be working," and that protest and direct action could be the only way to truly tackle climate change.

Hansen is not only one of the world's most outspoken scientists, but he is also one of the few experts putting his body on the line. He has participated in several climate change demonstrations this year and was arrested June 23 protesting mountaintop coal mining in West Virginia.

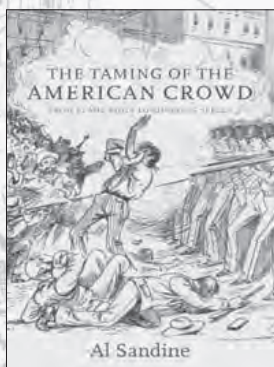
ACTION

Hundreds of thousands of people will engage in rallies and nonviolent civil disobedience in Copenhagen and around the world during the final week of the climate summit. Follow the actions at:

- climate-justice-action.org
- klimaforum09.org
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Pimp my Planet

A CONVERSATION
WITH THE DIRECTOR OF
OWNING THE WEATHER

RAINMAKER: Tommy Shearrer, former president of the Weather Modification Association.
PHOTO: OWNINGTHEWEATHER.COM

By Bryan Farrell

Geoengineering has become the subject of a great debate over whether we should consider a massive technological fix to climate change. Critics point toward the ecological and social consequences of “hacking the planet,” while supporters, like *SuperFreakonomics*’ Steven Levitt, say it is an easy, cost-effective solution that allows us to continue polluting without consequences. *Owning the Weather*, a new documentary directed by Robert Greene, tackles this very question. By examining previous attempts to control our environment — from indoor air-conditioning to cloud seeding for increased rainfall and hurricane modification — Greene weaves together a story that ultimately reveals how continually ill-equipped and under-prepared humans have been when it comes to unlocking the planet’s most mysterious and intricate of systems.

The *Independent*’s Bryan Farrell recently spoke with Greene about geoengineering, our connection to the environment and controlling the weather.

BRYAN FARRELL: How did you approach the making of the film?

ROBERT GREENE: It was important to me that this film not become like something you’d see on a cable news program, which would look at geo-engineering like it’s this cool new technology. I also didn’t want to take the extreme viewpoint that the government is trying to control the weather, like some folks believe, which is totally inaccurate. So I wanted to find that middle ground, but not the middle ground that is like the false global warming debate. I wanted something that showed human concerns versus environmental concerns versus scientists who want to do the right thing. It’s a subtle film in terms of what we, the filmmakers, think about the subject. Hopefully it will be a part of the debate to come.

BF: So what is your personal opinion?

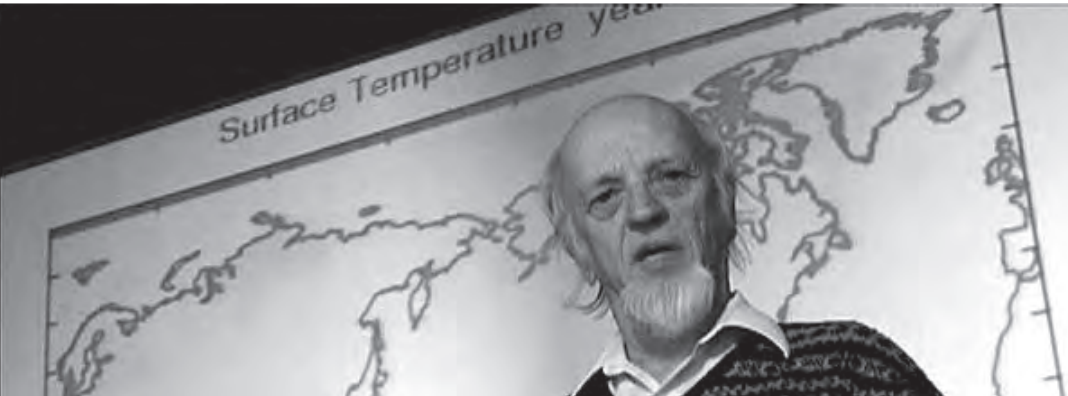
RG: It’s a complicated answer. I’m sort of ambivalent about cloud seeding because it’s not clear how much it actually works, even though it is adding

some pollution to the environment. Hurricane modification, on the other hand, is frightening. There are people who want to get rid of hurricanes. And we know so little about how the planet handles energy, which is essentially what hurricanes are. I understand the impulse of wanting to move it out of the way of New Orleans, but does that mean Mobile, Ala., is now in the way? We’re not able to make those kinds of decisions. And then there’s geoengineering, which I also understand is fueled by an instinct to do all you can to stop global warming. But the mentality behind geoengineering is the same mentality that got us into this mess in the first place. Basically we don’t understand our connection to the natural world and we don’t value it like we should. There’s no way geoengineering won’t cause major problems. Part of this “needing to solve” mentality is what led us here in the first place. Why can’t we realize we’re in a tough pickle instead of saying, “What’s the solution?”

BF: What can we do beyond looking for the perfect solution?

RG: The deepest thing we can do is realize, as all good lefties throughout history have been saying, that it is possible to destroy the world. I don’t know that we can do anything other than plan on possibly having to geoengineer. But we can’t go into it with the same sort of power structure intact because that will replicate the same mistakes. Right now, if it were used, it would be used in the worst possible way: as a political device to get someone out of trouble. It could easily be a situation where the economy continues to tank, another hurricane hits New Orleans and Obama is like, “We’re geoengineering!” So the idea is to wake up as a culture and evolve a little in our thinking about our connection to the environment. Then that culture can probably make better decisions about whether to geoengineer or not.

Owning the Weather (4th Row Films) will be shown at Astoria Indies in Queens Dec. 17 and the 92Y in Tribeca Jan. 7. The film is also currently available via Amazon and Cable Video on Demand. For more information, visit owningtheweather.com.



EXPLOSIVE: Tom Wigley, leading proponent of geoengineering, who proposes the “man-made volcano” idea.
PHOTO: OWNINGTHEWEATHER.COM



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BOOK RELEASE: REVOLUTIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE. Author Stephen Shukaitis explores collective imagination in social movement organizing in his new book, *Imaginal Machines: Autonomy & Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life* (Autonomedia / Minor Compositions). This event is part of the “This Is Forever” event and discussion series, which explores contemporary political issues through the lens of autonomist thought (thisisforever.org).

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Correcting the Record

The Battle of the Story of the “Battle of Seattle”
By DAVID SOLNIT AND REBECCA SOLNIT
AK Press, 2009

The *Battle of the Story of the “Battle of Seattle”* is an oddly convoluted title for such an easy read. Chock-full of photos and posters from the shutdown of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in December 1999, the book is closer to a ’zine with high production values than a typical collection of essays.

The core of the book is a pair of essays by siblings David and Rebecca Solnit on their endeavors to fight the “battle of the story.” David, who was a leading protest organizer, attempted to intervene in the making of the 2007 docu-drama *Battle in Seattle*, while Rebecca tried to get *The New York Times* to change its coverage of the protests and print a retraction. Both wanted to correct a long litany of disinformation about what went down in Seattle, such as the myth of protesters throwing urine, acid or even Molotov cocktails at police.

David argues that what happened in Seattle was the result of popular education, tireless organizing and well-formulated tactics and strategy. If those in power were surprised that protesters managed to shut down Seattle, they had only themselves to blame: they had been thoroughly apprised of protesters’ plans.

While the Solnits focus on what did not happen in Seattle, other participants provide background and firsthand accounts of what occurred. Chris Dixon contributes a piece about his experiences as a protester, and several essays about the World Trade Organization circulated by organizers in the months before the protests are reprinted at the back of the book.

The essays by the Solnits sometimes get bogged down in the picayune details of their fights with the media, but this does not diminish the importance of the project of reclaiming people’s history from the distortions of the mainstream media. It is only by understanding what actually happened at Seattle that activists can hope to learn from this success and apply these lessons to their own situations.

—MATT WASSERMAN



ELKE REVA SUDIN/elkerevasudin.com

Theory into Action

Direct Action: An Ethnography
By DAVID GRAEBER
AK PRESS, 2009

Social theory grows out of the sediment left behind by social movements, systematizing the advances made in practice at the level of theory. Ten years after Seattle, the global justice movement is beginning to bear intellectual fruit. David Graeber’s new tome, *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, is the most impressive attempt yet to understand the politics and promise of the global justice movement.

Direct Action can be roughly divided into three sections. The first four chapters consist of a description of planning meetings for the 2001 protest against the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) in Quebec City and of the action itself, expanded from Graeber’s notes and with the narrative flow of a novel. The next five chapters consist of observational essays on topics such as “activist culture,” “representation” and “meetings.” The final chapter, “Imagination,” is a theoretical reflection on the ethnography that precedes it.

In *Direct Action*, Graeber fleshes out an argument that he has made elsewhere: The ideology of the alter-globalization movement was contained in its practice. What seemed to outside observers like a chaotic mish-mash of messages at protests staged by Marxist groups was actually a conscious

choice to allow a diversity of viewpoints to be expressed. And what seemed like a tedious attention to meeting process was the result of a commitment to direct democracy and rejection of a politics of representation in favor of a politics of participation. Instead of focusing solely, or even largely, on ends, the global justice movement focused on means, attempting to live out its ideals in the present and sneak moments of liberation on the sly.

Graeber operates here as a participant-scholar who tries to efface — transcend? — the distinction between these two roles. The subtitle “An Ethnography” is a shout-out to *Direct Action*’s grounding in Graeber’s training as an anthropologist, but he is writing from inside the meetings and imagination of the global justice movement and not as a detached observer. While Graeber worked in New Haven as a professor at Yale University (until he was fired in 2005), in New York he was in the thick of the alter-globalization movement as a spokesperson for the Direct Action Network.

Graeber’s anthropological training and position as a participant allows him to go further than any previous writer in understanding the global justice movement. He focuses on meeting dynamics and organizing practices almost to the exclusion of any analysis of the ideology of the organizations or participants in the global justice movement. To the extent that he tackles the subject, he categorizes most members of the movement as “small *a* anarchists,” steeped in anarchist principles but with little connection to historical traditions

of anarchist struggle or allegiance to any particular school of anarchism.

While anarchists formed the avant-garde of the global justice movement, they generally did not try to convert other protesters and sympathizers to an explicit belief system. Instead of pushing a party line, they spread practices, advocating the adoption of affinity groups, consensus-based decision-making and spokescouncils. Graeber argues that the Direct Action Network, the most significant organization of the global justice movement, while short-lived, was extraordinarily successful in diffusing a directly democratic model of organizing.

The global justice movement ground to a halt after 9/11, unable to maintain its momentum in the context of heightened state repression and the failure of the non-strategy of staging protests at each successive trade summit. However, Graeber reminds the reader of how much it did accomplish.

In a few short years following Seattle, the global justice movement not only brought protest back into the public eye in the global North, it shattered the neoliberal consensus to which Margaret Thatcher had declared there was no alternative. Seattle and what followed revealed the possibilities of alternative ways of ordering the world that had been rendered invisible during the short-lived “end of history.”

Direct Action shows us that not only is another world possible, but, for all its faults, the practice of the global justice movement helps illustrate what this world might look like.

—MATT WASSERMAN

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Love in the Time of Trotsky

The Sweetest Dream: Love, Lies, & Assassination

BY LILLIAN POLLAK
SELF-PUBLISHED, 2008

Few novels address the experience of Trotskyism in United States. Harvey Swados's *Standing Fast* (1970) comes to mind, as does Earl Birney's cross-border reflections in *Down the Long Table* (1955). Both of these fictional accounts, however, unfold on the margins of U.S. anti-Stalinist politics, the first focusing on the organizational life of Max Shachtman's break from orthodox Trotskyism, the second filtered through the lens of McCarthyism's later impact on a Canadian recruit to dissident communism.

Lillian Pollak has a different perspective and chronology from those of Swados and Birney. Her backdrop is a period of momentous struggles, in the United States and around the world, associated with Trotskyism's first decade and its leader's brutal Stalinist-orchestrated murder in Mexico in 1940. Woven into the plot, like connective strands, are illuminating commentaries on the Great Depression, reference to the mass strikes of 1934 and representations of the Spanish Civil War. Cultural movements, such as the rise of modern dance, are also a significant component of the novel, breathing a freshness into the storyline often absent in archetypal "proletarian novels."

Clearly autobiographical, Pollak's *The Sweetest Dream* presents all of this through the eyes of Miriam, a young recruit to Trotskyism in the 1930s. Miriam embraces Trotskyism — as did many in the young movement — against all odds. The barriers to her oppositional politics include an insensitive mother who cynically repudiates her daughter's revolutionary commitment and dreams of making a fortune in real estate and the narrow vision of those radicals who stay in the official Communist camp, blind to the atrocities being committed in Stalin's Soviet Union. Drawn to the anti-Stalinist program of the Communist League of America (Opposition) and its ultimate successor, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Miriam rubs shoulders with most of the major figures in U.S. Trotskyism. She eventually makes her way to Mexico, where she meets Trotsky and those responsible for his safety, Mexican revolutionaries and emissaries from the SWP, which was then a leading section of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

What is unique about Pollak's

presentation is that Miriam's best and long-cherished childhood friend, the vivacious Ketzal, is something of her political mirror image. Born into a well-to-do Mexican family, Ketzal is bohemian and avant-garde, beautiful and impetuous. Miriam, in contrast, is a poor daughter of the New York Jewish ghetto, circumscribed by a plainness that she cannot ever quite transcend. As a child, she idolizes Ketzal's parents and their deep commitment to the Soviet Union and Stalin's leadership of the Communist International.

Designated "A Novel of the Thirties," Pollak's fiction explores what many careful histories sometimes find illusive: the conflict between Trotskyism and Stalinism, the complex and sometimes contradictory character of political "choice" in the revolutionary left and the deep mark commitment leaves on both politics and personal life. *The Sweetest Dream* masterfully recreates the dilemmas and delusions, as well as the defiant heroism, that defined the revolutionary youth of the 1930s. Few histories give us a view of the "Jimmie Higgins" of the left more powerfully than this book.

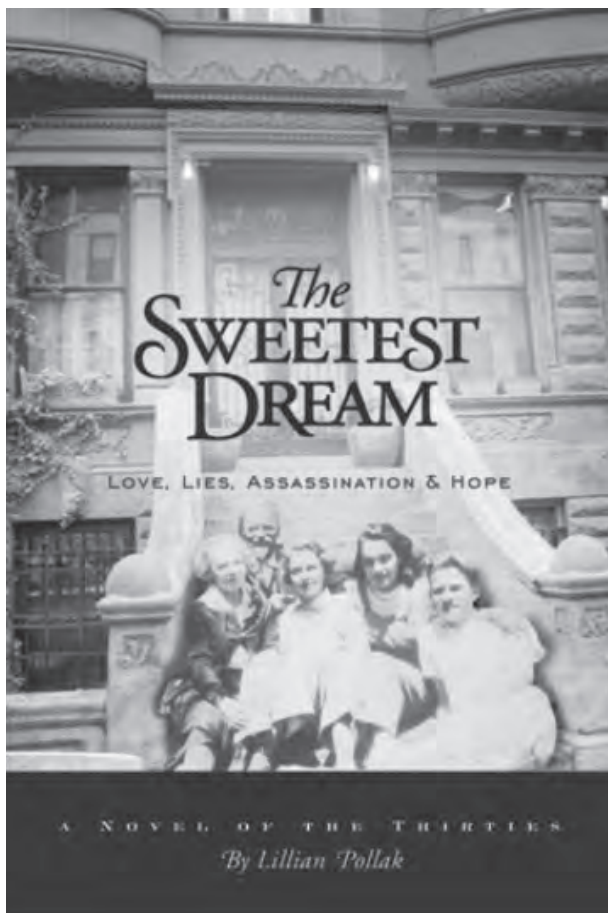
Ultimately, *The Sweetest Dream* is about lost loves. Miriam and Ketzal never quite secure and sustain the loves their lives so desperately need and deserve. The novel makes the profound point that this is not only a matter of personal failures of all kinds, but

also an issue of politics. And for Miriam, Trotsky's assassination, with which she and Ketzal are unwittingly associated, silences the voice that had spoken to her so forcefully in the 1930s: "Life is beautiful," Trotsky had written passionately, "Live it to the fullest." As Miriam and her comrades realized, the possibility of doing so was never separable from the revolutionary aspirations they cultivated in their youth.

The love that Miriam and Ketzal have for one another, and the hopes, however different, that they share for a better world, manage, in spite of what is arrayed against all of this, to survive. Pollak, a "Raging Granny" who, at 93, still puts in appearances at conferences, lectures and gatherings of United States Trotskyists, regaling crowds with her remembrances of struggles past, has followed the admonition of her mentor, Leon Trotsky. *The Sweetest Dream* gives us but a piece of her fascinating history, lived to its fullest. It is a fragment you will not want to put down.

—BRYAN D. PALMER

This review first appeared in Labour/Le Travail, a journal of Canadian Labor Studies. Bryan D. Palmer is a professor of Canadian studies at Trent University and is the editor of Labour/Le Travail.



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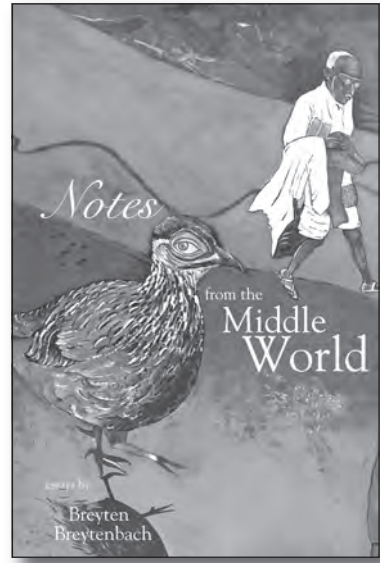
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NOTES FROM THE MIDDLE WORLD

Breyten Breytenbach

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A year since the attack and no homes have been rebuilt...

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A year since the attack and the water and sewage systems have not been repaired...

A year since the attack and people are still dying for lack of medical care....

How long must **1.5 million people** wait before they can begin to reconstruct their lives?

The time is now.

The siege must end.

The borders must be opened.

Governments have failed to act.

We must act instead.

Please visit www.gazafreedommarch.org to:

- » endorse the march
- » support actions around the world on December 31st
- » donate towards school supplies for the children of Gaza



Gaza

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